

# Three Different Types of Baptism in the Catholic Church

by Philip Kosloski

The Catholic Church teaches that “The Lord himself affirms that **Baptism is necessary for salvation**” (CCC 1257). When most people hear that teaching, they immediately think of all the unbaptized individuals in the world. It would appear that God is unjust and harsh, dooming so many people to hell who do not have access to the sacrament of baptism.

Yet, the Church has taught for centuries that baptism can include 3 different “types.”

## 1. BAPTISM OF WATER

The “ordinary” type of baptism is the one we are all most familiar with.

The *essential rite* of the sacrament follows: *Baptism* properly speaking ... signifies and actually brings about death to sin and entry into the life of the Most Holy Trinity through configuration to the Paschal mystery of Christ. **Baptism is performed in the most expressive way by triple immersion in the baptismal water.** However, from ancient times it has also been able to be conferred by pouring the water three times over the candidate’s head. CCC 1239

This type of baptism follows Jesus’ example in the Gospel and is the sacramental way to be immersed into the life of grace.

Baptism by water doesn’t guarantee a ticket to heaven, but it does lay the foundation of grace that all Christians can either accept or reject. If we accept it, then God will guide us along the right path and into his loving arms.

## 2. BAPTISM OF DESIRE

This second type of baptism is the most confusing and also the one most open to interpretation. The most obvious example of this desire is when a person is on the road to baptism, but is unable to finish it.

For *catechumens* who die before their Baptism, **their explicit desire to receive it**, together with repentance for their sins, and charity, assures them the salvation that they were not able to receive through the sacrament. CCC 1259

However, this also includes *anyone* who may have “desired” baptism, even if they never knew what the sacrament was.

“Since Christ died for all, and since all people are in fact called to one and the same destiny, which is divine, we must hold that the Holy Spirit offers to all the possibility of being made partakers, in a way known to God, of the Paschal mystery.” **Every person who is ignorant of the Gospel of Christ and of his Church, but seeks the truth and does the will of God in accordance with his understanding of it, can be saved.** It may be supposed that such persons would have *desired Baptism explicitly* if they had known its necessity. CCC 1260

This type of baptism is the most encompassing, for it includes anyone who would have desired baptism, “if they truly knew its importance.” Ultimately it comes down to **God’s mercy** and his determination on how well that individual followed the path laid out for him.

The key here is that **the individual did not know** the importance of baptism.

### 3. BAPTISM OF BLOOD

After baptism of water, this type of baptism is the most obvious. Basically, it is when **an unbaptized person dies for the Christian faith.**

The Church has always held the firm conviction that those **who suffer death for the sake of the faith without having received**

**Baptism** are baptized by their death for and with Christ. CCC  
1258

If you die for Christ, but are not a “Christian,” than you most assuredly are “baptized.”